

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PA-04 PRS-01 CIAE-00 INR-11 NSAE-00

RSC-01 AID-20 EB-11 AGR-20 SWF-02 IO-14 SIL-01 LAB-06

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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO USIA WASHDC

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SUBJ: REACTION TO FILM ON DROUGHT

REF: ADDIS ABABA 11098

1. AS INDICATED IN REFTTEL, AFCC USING TELEVISION AS EFFECTIVE MEANS DISCREDIT MONARCHY. TWO SHOWINGS OF FILM ON DROUGHT WITHIN TEN-DAY PERIOD SEEN BY THOUSANDS OF ADDIS RESIDENTS AND THOSE WHO DIDN'T SEE IT HEARD ABOUT ROYAL FAMILY'S EXCESS FROM FRIENDS.

2. FILM, WHICH WAS MADE BY AN ENGLISHMAN AND SHOWN THROUGH-OUT EUROPE SEVERAL MONTHS AGO, WAS CRAFTILY EDITED BY AFCC. ORIGINAL VERSION DEALT STRICTLY WITH DROUGHT. AFCC ADDED SEVERAL SCENES OF ROYAL FAMILY AT VARIOUS FUNCTIONS.

3. FOR EXAMPLE, IN FIRST SHOWING GENERAL VIEW OF THOUSANDS OF EMACIATED DROUGHT VICTIMS SITTING ALONG ROADSIDE WAITING FOR FOOD WAS FOLLOWED BY CHAMPAGNE RECEPTION SCENE AT PALACE.

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ANOTHER SCENE SHOWING MEMBERS OF ROYAL FAMILY AND FORMER

CABINET MINISTERS AT WEDDING WITH A HUGE BIRTHDAY CAKE WHICH WAS IMPORTED FROM ENGLAND FOR OCCASION WAS FOLLOWED BY SCENE SHOWING CLOSEUPS OF SEVERAL CHILDREN WHO HAD DIED OF STARVATION.

4. SECOND SHOWING EMBELLISHED EVEN FURTHER AND FOOTAGE OF YOUNGSTERS WITH SWOLLEN STOMACHS WAS FOLLOWED BY SCENE SHOWING EMPEROR FEEDING HIS ANIMALS.

5. IN ADDITION, SECOND TIME FILM SHOWN (SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 15 FROM 7-8PM), AFCC MADE SURE AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE TUNED IN. ANNOUNCEMENT OF UPCOMING TELECAST WAS BROADCAST ON RADIO/TV AND APPEARED IN PRINT MEDIA TWO DAYS PRIOR TO ACTUAL SHOWING.

6. NIGHT FILM WAS Aired, EVERY BAR IN ADDIS WITH TV SET WAS JAMMED TO CAPACITY WITH CROWDS FLOWING OUT INTO STREET. SEVERAL THOUSAND PEOPLE SAW PROGRAM ON SIX "PUBLIC" TELEVISION SETS PLACED AT KEY LOCATIONS IN CITY'S LARGEST SQUARES AND EVEN PRIVATE TV OWNERS HAD SRO CROWDS AT THEIR HOMES.

7. SECOND SHOWING HAD DESIRED EFFECT. IF THERE WAS ANY SYMPATHY FOR CROWN AND MONARCHY LEFT, IT DISAPPEARED THAT NIGHT.

8. FOLLOWING SHOWING SEVERAL THOUSAND PEOPLE WERE ROAMING STREETS OF CITY, MANY HOSTILE IN MOOD.

9. IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE, HOWEVER, THAT DESPITE AFCC'S HIGHLY EFFECTIVE USE OF TELEVISION MEDIUM TO DOWNGRADE -- OBLITERATE -- MONARCHY, SHOWING HAD NEGATIVE SIDE AFFECTS THAT AFCC OBVIOUSLY DID NOT COUNT ON.

10. MAKING GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS AND EXPOSING SO MANY HUNGRY AND UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE TO SUCH HIGHLY INFLAMMATORY FILM IN VIRTUALLY UNCONTROLLED CIRCUMSTANCES, COULD HAVE LET TO UGLY INCIDENTS, ESPECIALLY SINCE CROWDS WERE IN STREETS AFTER DARK.

11. SECONDLY, THERE IS CLEAR EVIDENCE THAT AFTER VIEWING FILM AND BEING SATURATED ON REGULAR BASIS WITH ANTI-ROYAL FAMILY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AND ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT PROPOGANDA ON RADIO AS WELL, AS UNDER-CURRENT OF HOSTILITY IS BUILDING IN CITY AGAINST ANYONE WHO APPEARS TO BE EVEN SLIGHTLY AFFLUENT.

12. AT FIRST THIS WAS BELIEVED TO BE AN ANTI "FERENJI" (FOREIGNER) GROWNSWELL, BUT CONVERSATIONS WITH NUMBER OF ETHIOPIANS HAS CLEARLY ESTABLISHED ETHIOPIANS THEMSELVES ARE BECOMING MORE AND MORE CONCERNED WITH CURRENT

SITUATION.

13. MOST OF THOSE QUESTIONED WERE IN MIDDLE AND LOWER MIDDLE CLASS. ANYONE OWNING A CAR--EVEN AN OLD VOLKSWAGON--IS CONSIDERED "WEALTHY" BY LOCAL STANDARDS AND MANY HAVE REPORTED PURCHASING FIREARMS, STAYING AT HOME AT NIGHT, FORTIFYING THEIR HOMES AND TAKING OTHER PRECAUTIONS AGAINST A POSSIBLE "POOR PEOPLES' REVOLT," WHICH MANY ETHIOPIANS THINK IS DISTINCT POSSIBILITY IF AFCC KEEPS FANNING FIRES OF CLASS HATRED INDISCRIMINATELY. UNLESS AFCC TONES DOWN THIS CAMPAGNE THEY FEEL THAT WIDESPREAD LOOTING AND CHAOS COULD RESULT AND THAT IT WOULD BE MAINLY DIRECTED AGAINST THE ETHIOPIAN OF AVERAGE AND, IN MANY CASES, OF LESS THAN AVERAGE MEANS.

14. WE HAVE ALSO LEARNED THAT DROUGHT RELIEF COMMITTEE PLANS TO TAKE FILM TO COUNTRYSIDE AND SHOW IT IN ALL PROVINCIAL CAPITALS, AS WELL AS SMALLER CITIES THROUGHOUT COUNTRY.

15. PROBLEMS DISCUSSED ABOVE COULD BE COMPOUNDED IN COUNTRY-SIDE WHERE PEASANTS, WHO HAVE NEVER BEEN EXPOSED THIS TYPE OF PROPOGANDA, MAY REACT MORE EMOTIONALLY THAN HARDENED CITY DWELLERS.
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